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ADDRESS OF  
HONORABLE FRANK S. BLACK



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AT

CARNEGIE HALL

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 30, 1908

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**HONORABLE FRANK S. BLACK**  
**At Carnegie Hall, New York**  
**October 30, 1908**

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*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen*—Whoever approaches this political situation with no guide but the platforms of the two parties, is likely to be lost in the fog. The strange sounds about him will be more apt to confuse than direct. These sounds are not the words of assurance and command which captains deliver who know their course, but rather the sounds which sailors make when throwing each other overboard.

We are therefore denied two sources of light which often we have had. Those in command do not inspire general confidence; their destination is not settled and many fear that their business may be to prey upon some things which the majority of mankind desires to protect. So it is not fair to blame a timid man if he stays ashore awhile to get his bearings. His task even on the land will not be easy. Assertions this year are uncommonly strong, but the facts do not always bear them out. Promises are made with the extravagance of a bankrupt, but they do not convince as they might if promises had not been broken ever since men began to cheat each other, which was early in their career. Charges are flying thicker than they ever flew before, so thick that the hope that any man will escape seems unreasonable. But if these charges are true, the majority belongs in jail. There are but few righteous men abroad, hardly enough to act as turnkeys for their incarcerated friends. If these charges are true it would be hard for the honest men to support those who should be in prison, for it must be observed that some of the most conspicuous of these honest men have derived their incomes mostly through public salaries paid in large part by malefactors on whose activities the dungeon is again about to close.

So it must be that things are not always as described. The only thing for us to do, then, is to examine for ourselves. We may not be right but it will pay to be intelligent. I would say that it will pay to be honest, but that word has been used so many times by those who never knew its meaning that I flinch when I come to it lately. The first thing necessary to a fair start is to refuse to be affected by any kind of humbug. This will be difficult, for while in times past the humbug business has seemed so free and simple that most any one could do a little for himself, it has late years been so cornered and improved and the output has been so incessant and attractive that most every one has bowed to the humbug trust because, compared with that, he was ashamed of anything he could do himself.

But while we are in this anti-trust crusade let us start fair by first killing off this biggest one of all.

On examination we find some things to depress but more to encourage. But the present we must take as we find it. We must deal fairly with ourselves, for whoever tries any other way will only waste his time and had better join the crowd and go along with that. The things we ought to know seem plain enough and an hour's time by each man with himself ought to head him out into the clearing.

These things at least are obvious: the unparalleled prosperity, so lately here, has taken wing. The demand for laborers which a year ago could not be met, now finds them by thousands idle on the streets. Luxuries which seemed within easy reach last year have in many cases been exchanged for the necessities of this. The discussion is no longer whether existing plants shall be enlarged, but whether they shall run at all. Organizations of labor, instead of dictating the terms of their employment, are drawing on their treasuries to help the unemployed. Capital, for years possessed of courage to enter any promising expedition, now deems itself unsafe unless every night it can return to the vault.

These changes have not come through lack of money, for all that was here a year ago is here now. They have not come through over-supply of labor, for hundreds of thousands have returned to the shores from whence they came. They have not

come because the ground, the source of all our fortunes, has refused its bounty, for it has produced in such abundance as to surpass most previous years. No plague or wide calamity has appeared among us. The general health has been robust, and over all, the blessings of peace have rested unruffled and serene.

What has so rudely altered the conditions of American life? It is the abrupt and violent departure of that quality without which no business will ever be freely done, without which civilization would stand still in its tracks—the confidence which men have toward each other. Confidence never leaves without calling in a substitute to take its place. That substitute is suspicion, the hangdog of all the human traits. With that on guard no worthy human motive ever stood a chance. Whoever, without cause, brings about that substitution, has taken on himself a load which neither he can throw off nor his name live down.

The departure of this confidence occasioned no surprise. It could not be expected to remain. The public mind has not been free from those charges which have kept it at the highest point of apprehension. We have not been content to discover and punish, but have sought rather to promulgate such charges as should chain the attention of the populace by arousing its anger. We have exhausted ourselves in the indictment and then with no attempt at proof, have abandoned it for new sensations. We should have done far better for the welfare of our people and the fame of the country if we had framed true accusations and pursued them to the end.

No man has the right to claim exemption from the penalty of his deeds. If he has abused his power, even though it be the power of wealth which he himself accumulated, he has invited the enmity of those he has injured and deserves the punishment the law provides. But he is the one on whom that punishment should fall. The state is strong enough, the law is just enough to punish the evil-doer without embracing in its chastisement those whose only connection with his wrong was to be the victim of it. The claim that those who hold this view are the friends or paid defenders of the criminal, is both unjust and cheap.

The impulse of fair play in those who really have it, demands

that every dog shall have his day and believes that every man is as good as any dog.

I desire not that the guilty should escape, but that the innocent should. If this cannot be done the law is a sham. If it can be done the prosecution which fails to do it is a sham. I believe in punishing the guilty but I do not believe in pursuing the culprit by firing into the crowd. He is always on his guard and gets behind some other man while all the rest are unawares and likely to be hit. In all this turmoil we have not delivered one single culprit over to the warden but have sent thousands of innocent bystanders to the hospitals.

If I object to the slaughter of the innocent and the escape of the guilty you can never clean your own record by calling me the culprit's friend. Some time this will be clear to everybody's mind and then the day of broadsides at the crowd and mock trials at the county fairs will be over.

But the most dangerous aspect of our condition is not the shrinkage of our physical comforts. It is the prevalence of discontent, the belief that more should be had than is given, the constant and growing hunger for illegitimate advantage. Labor never demanded so much and returned so little; money never augmented its earning power with so unbridled a disposition to cheat; public servants never in so many cases fooled the people and substituted deception for honest work. The moral tone has been relaxed. Those forces which we have been accustomed to regard as the greatest menace to stable government, have now become potential with the government itself. Herein lies our greatest danger and we must call a halt and return to the basis of good faith.

The difficulties which beset me are not mine alone. Few men of intelligence are this year uttering political hosannas. The belief is not uncommon now that it will pay to listen to the admonitions of the industrious who have, as well as to the mutterings of the discontented who desire. We have long taken counsel of that discontent with a patience and docility that make us marvel.

We have belabored wealth until there is no phrase known to incontinent speech we have not applied to it. Reaction has



become a hardly less ferocious word than treason. But our reforms have all been oral; we have punished no one. And during this protracted carnival the price of many of the necessities of our daily life has mounted higher and higher. Meat, grain, clothes, have all gone steadily up. We have set our traps and covered them with vituperation and been caught in them ourselves. We have danced long and boisterously, but no man can truly say that we have not paid the fiddler.

These harsh conditions bear not alone upon the poor but most heavily on him. The indirect and shadowy rebuke to the wrongdoer which comes to him only as one of the populace punished as a whole, is trivial and hardly felt. Such wrongdoer is often powerful and intrenched, and the loss to him is comparatively slight, while the weak and unoffending suffer losses they never can repair. Capital suffers least of all, for its shrinkage is but momentary. The lost value speedily returns, but labor's sacrifices can never be made up. Capital lives for years, but labor only for a day. When the sun goes down it sets forever on that day's opportunities. The value of your railroads will come back. Your houses will continue to fulfill their uses, but the unperformed labor of today is as the rain that did not fall and is worth no more.

This problem then is for the laborer and he must take it up. And when he starts again he had better turn a cold shoulder to those who have charged all his troubles upon others and examine himself to see whether any of the fault is his.

Our conditions ought to be changed. The sentiment of the country is a unit at least on that. How can this change be brought about? There may be many ways, but whatever they are they will all be affected some, by the policy of the government for the next four years. That policy will soon be determined and if discussed at all it must be done now. A political election is not a cure-all, but is nevertheless a substantial influence. That makes it important to dispose of it right.

There are only two parties, Mr. President, to be considered, and the standing of each must be determined by its history, its platform and its candidates. Neither platform is in all respects such as a great party ought to draw. I claim the right to say

this because this is a year when platforms count for less than ever and even candidates make their own. The line of division between the two old parties is nearly erased. Their claims are too similar to allow any bitter discussion. To the discredit of both parties they are in the field partly as bidders for votes instead of solely as advocates of great principles. The declaration by each upon the subject of injunctions is shifty and insincere and unworthy of a great political body. The courts of this country have been its main reliance. This has been true even when every branch of the government was content to operate within its constitutional grooves. Now when the tendency seems unchecked to encroach and over-ride, the deliberate submission by both parties to the most dangerous spirit abroad must fill every patriotic American with misgivings and regret.

But leaving the platforms out, the history and the candidates of the two parties still remain. To repeat the history of the republican party is only to recite the best political achievements of the human race; to enumerate those names which still inspire the lofty sentiments of gratitude and veneration; to appeal to those emotions which in every age have sustained those spirits which aspired to equality and freedom. Not now can it be said that that history needs to be proclaimed. There is no slope or valley round the world where men still dream of liberty and hope for broader opportunity, where that history is not the chart and compass that indicates the open way. I shall call no witnesses and file no brief. The figures, times and places may be found in any pamphlet. The details have all been sounded over with the weary iteration of a moving train.

Whoever wants the tariff or the public debt, the population or the export trade, can find it in the census, in the campaign hand book or in those illuminating speeches by which the public is now being depressed and educated.

The republican party means more than these to me. It means the purpose and the power of the law to keep an open space round every man while he works out his own salvation. It means a guaranty which gives strength and courage to the toiler because he knows that what he earns by day shall belong to him at night. It means a government which shall encourage

without leading, and protect without meddling. It means an influence vital and continuous, for higher citizenship and broader national purposes. If it did not mean these things it would not inspire me. My veneration and regard for that party are not weakened by the temporary embarrassments in which it now appears. I prophesy that its future will be no less brilliant than its past. The unsteadiness of the present will pass away and it will again become the party of order and sobriety.

In this belief I am encouraged by the character of the candidates whom that party has proposed. There have been few candidates of either party whose general equipment for the office of President has been better than that of William H. Taft. He comes from a distinguished family. His father bore an honored name and his high character was transmitted to his sons. The education of the candidate, his temperament, above all his character and disposition, fit him for large responsibilities. In the next four years changes may occur in the Federal Supreme Court. The functions of that great court permit no ostentation and its acts seldom attract the public notice. It is nevertheless the most powerful and constant safeguard in our government of all the rights which free men prize, and by far the strongest guaranty of the continuance of the government itself. The patriotic citizen might well cast his vote with his eye fixed on the future of that great tribunal. Mr. Taft's long and brilliant training at the bar and on the bench will assure the high character of that court which it has always, and never more than now, maintained. He has no traits which are erratic or unstable; he is the embodiment of sense and candor. He is neither vain-glorious nor showy, but the unbroken record of his manhood is one of substantial achievement. He is neither quarrelsome nor boastful, but as solid as the rocks. He has ambition, for most Americans inherit that, if nothing else. But he will not rise on any man's misfortunes. He will not kick another who is down nor crowd him because he has the power. He has told you that. No brave man ever does and Taft has the courage to be fair. There is no opinion too humble to be admitted to his consideration, but the one he acts on will be his own. Any citizen of the country can approach him but not all of them can

carry him away. Neither rich nor poor need fear an injustice nor expect an advantage. The doctrine of fair play will not struggle for new or peculiar meanings but will go back to its old one, which is by far the best. With him at the helm the ship of state will not go scudding from the shoals to the rocks and back again. He will put it in calm water and steer it himself.

But they tell us he believes in the present policies of the Republican party. Let no one be alarmed at that. Every Republican in the country so believes. Those policies are not new. They are older than the party is.

A square deal for every age, rank and condition; is that new? Were the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the Federal Constitution framed by a party that did not believe in a square deal? An equal chance for rich and poor; is that new? Is the party that elected Lincoln, a man so poor he borrowed money to get to Washington, a party that panders to the rich? Honesty in private and public life; is that new? Did that party which gave to William McKinley a measure of affection and respect which the annals of this country hardly parallel, bestow their confidence on him because they thought he was degraded?

I, as one self-respecting citizen of this great country, resent the imputation that I did not understand years and years ago the meaning and the value of virtue, courage and integrity.

Those policies that have made the country great; those charities that have covered the land with the pledges of fellowship; that courage that has leaned against the bayonet for conscience sake; that sense of justice that canceled every worldly tie for a negro and a slave—all these are new, they tell me, and came here only yesterday.

They are not new. They are as old as human consciences and kept the world together ages before any soul now living ever saw the light.

Taft believes in these things and it will be a desolate hour in this great land when a majority of his countrymen do not believe them too.

But the policies themselves should not be confounded with their interpretation. An even temper, a balanced mind, a level

sense of justice and a continuing courage can be trusted not to reach conclusions distorted or grotesque.

A square deal will not be a trade mark, but a principle. Wealth will not be favored nor labor fed on flattery. Whatever is yours you will have without barter, and mine you cannot have at all. Justice will be done, not as in a play, with climax and excitement, but as the orderly, natural and expected procedure under a fair and intelligent government.

If you are satisfied with that you will never find a candidate who will fit more squarely with your views of what a President should be than Taft.

Mr. President, the Democratic candidate has called again, but we have seen no occasion to revise the answer so often given, and I shall not repeat at tiresome length the reasons for that answer, now for years well known. Mr. Bryan's chief service to the country has been in three times keeping the Presidential nomination from some other Democrat who might possibly have been elected. His views are startling but not new. They are too old to take anybody unawares and too many of them have just been tried, and with results too distressing, to recommend their continuance. We do not need further excitement, we need rest. There are millions of people and hundreds of interests that have not had a long breath in several years. We have been on the double quick so long that to many the prospect of camp for the night seems like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Its attractiveness would not lessen if the prospect for rations should improve. A good performer is not always a good provider. We have learned that and the invitation to prolong the entertainment falls now on many unresponsive ears that formerly were eager. Excitement may at times attract, but food has not altogether lost its charm. That is why so many who have already fasted long enough will not vote to prolong it under Mr. Bryan.

It is generally true that state campaigns, important though they are, are swallowed in the broader field of national affairs. This state affords this year a singular exception. I do not remember when a candidate for Governor in any commonwealth has attracted the attention and chained the interest which has followed the Republican candidate for Governor of New York.

This arises from the fact that that candidate presents to the American voter a unique and remarkable figure. With no political experience, with no taste for political affairs, with an unwavering preference for that profession in which his distinction has been great, he is yet thrust by circumstances to the very pivot of public attention. He has become, through no intention of his own, the subject of a controversy somewhat unusual and severe. Party lines this year are more relaxed than they have been in my remembrance, but around the Governor the controversy has gathered with peculiar heat. It is this that leads me to present him to my fellow citizens as he appears to me. His ability is large. His industry exceeds that of any other Governor I have known. His fidelity to the public interest never tires. He has no back door to the Executive Chamber, but the front door was never open wider. They call him cold; that is not true. He is democratic, affable and sincere, but his friendship is for principles rather than for men. Whatever his attitude may be he at least believes it to be right. His powers of comprehension and his mastery of public affairs are the marvel of those familiar with his performances, while his genius in forensic discussion has attracted the eyes of the whole country to his state.

One trait I have not named, I mean his independence. That appears in every act of his career, perhaps too much. But independence begets a feeling in others of confidence and safety not often experienced in these days, for then we know that no public or private right is the subject of trade or favor. And independence is so rare and fine a thing that I do not withhold my admiration for it even though it runs a little wild.

The people of this country have long pictured such a man as the highest type of public servant. Their sincerity as well as his record is the issue now.

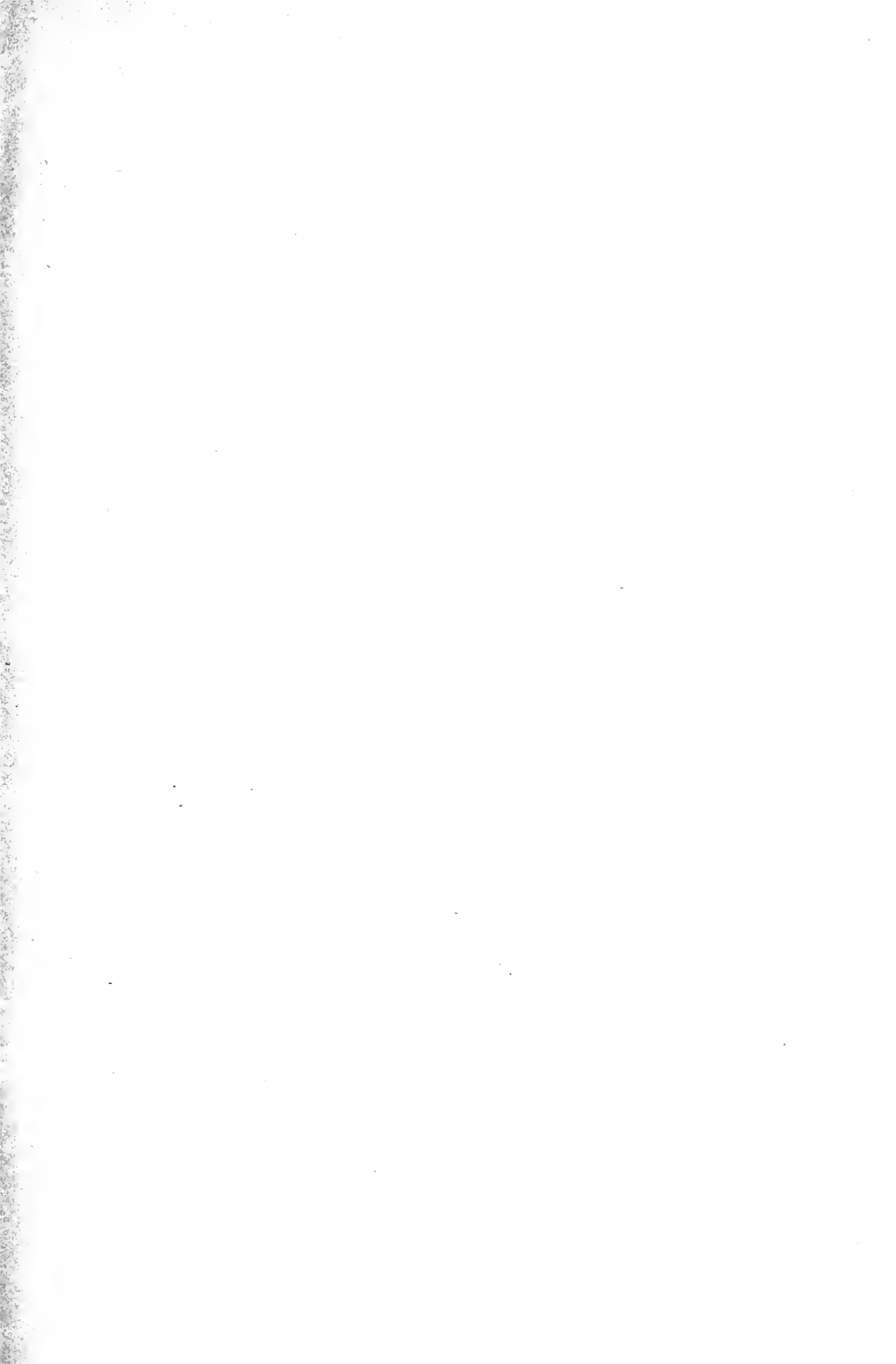
Mr. President, I have not believed that anything I might say would affect those whose minds are made up as soon as the party label is pasted on, or that other class, now so numerous and fervid, who hope by disparaging success to justify their own failure to attain it. I appeal rather to those whose party allegiance has been sorely tested by the substitution of fantastic

personal impulses in the place of established Republican principles. I appeal to those who understand the structure of our government, who realize how far its functions have been perverted and who would make any sacrifice to see those functions restored to their normal and intended spheres. I know those aberrations which have so alarmed us have occurred under the party emblem, but that is not a reason either for approving them or for deserting the high standard on which so many glorious achievements are inscribed. I am a firm believer in political parties and their organizations. I believe that any man who throws down his friends will, when it serves him, throw the people down. Whoever does not love the human being does not love the human race. As between the heart and conscience I would rather have the heart. But I am not misled by names or banners. A party name does not always represent that party's history or ideals, and policies do not always come true to seed. Every name worth having is likely to be used for unworthy purposes. Charity, philanthropy and religion have been used a thousand times to cover cheats, but not by that was one believer dissuaded from the true cause. Great men long dead are oftentimes maligned and their parts are even played by actors on the stage, but not by that is a single character pulled down from its pedestal. The name of statesmanship has been applied to acts grotesque and shocking, but not by that was the just fame of one statesman tarnished or reduced.

So has the power of the Republican name been used to mask performances which no true Republican would father or condone, but not by that are its principles shaken or its history wiped out. Checked and perverted they may be, but only for awhile. To-morrow they will swing along their way again with strength and courage all the more splendid and assuring because of the punishments they have just passed through. The Republican party is still the highest guaranty of constitutional government in this world. And to that party should still adhere those patriots throughout the land who still retain a memory and a hope.







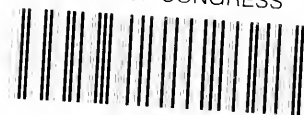
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